

# Getting from A to B

## a development framework for new librarians

a

When the University of Tasmania (UTAS) Library began offering entry-level positions (Level A) for liaison (academic) librarian vacancies it soon became clear that this was only the beginning; with no clear orientation structure in place new librarians were largely left to fend for themselves. In 2007 the "Liaison Librarian A Developmental Framework" was implemented to provide new librarians with a detailed structure for skill and knowledge development. Defining a set of core capabilities and performance criteria the Framework provides a pathway for professional recognition and promotion from Level A to Level B.

### Mapping the landscape

In 2005 the University of Tasmania Library embarked on a comprehensive workforce planning project. Among many findings, three factors stood out as significant barriers to the retention of experienced staff and the development of new librarians:

- the ad-hoc evolution of divergent position descriptions in the Library's 7 branches
- the chronic under-classification of most librarians at Level A – technically the entry level – regardless of actual skills and experience
- the lack of any formal mechanism of development for new librarians

These factors meant that there was very little movement or growth within and between positions, and consequently led to increasingly high levels of attrition among librarians classified at Level A. It became clear that action had to be taken to resolve this unsustainable situation.

### Planning the route

The major steps taken in this direction were:

- the implementation of a new, centrally defined framework of generic position descriptions, to encourage skill development and transferral across branches
- the wholesale reclassification of all experienced Level A librarians to the more appropriate Level B
- subsequently offering new vacancies at Level A, the graduate-entry level, to provide opportunities for new librarians to enter the workforce

The fourth measure was the implementation of a formal development structure to allow these new, Level A librarians the opportunity to develop their skills and, in time, articulate to Level B.

### The journey begins: The Liaison Librarian - A developmental framework

From the outset the aim at UTAS Library was to create an environment in which the new, Level A librarian was empowered to learn and develop. To achieve this, the Liaison Librarian A Developmental Framework was developed as a scaffolded learning structure in which learning was supported but not prescribed.

Nevertheless, in order to be functional the Framework did outline a number of **Core Capabilities** necessary to fulfil the role of Level B Liaison Librarian at UTAS Library.

Charted against each Core Capability were:

- Performance Criteria:** examples of the practical expression of each capability, delineated by level of complexity at A and B levels
- Learning Activities:** optional methods for fast-tracking skill development
- Evidence of Learning:** an open-ended space for charting context-appropriate evidence including documentary evidence (eg. Learning plans, written feedback) conceptual understanding or demonstrated proficiency

New librarians were not left to navigate this process on their own; regular mentoring meetings between the librarian and their supervisor were included as an integral part of the process, allowing the process of guided learning to be fully realised within a negotiated level of supervision.

In keeping with the Framework's status as a working document rather than a static guide, the comments seen below are an example of those appearing in the final version of the document; notes, questions and comments were added, amended and removed as capacities were earmarked for further learning, or signed off as achieved throughout the development process.

Capability	Performance Criteria	Learning Activities	Types of Evidence	Discussion (Librarian)	Comments (Supervisor)
	(add additional criteria as required)	(add appropriate learning activities as required)	(add types of evidence as appropriate)		
Advising and consulting in curriculum development	LLA Discusses and recommends changes to curriculum to Team's Teaching and Learning leader and peers			Engaged in co-development og embedded info lit in BMA101 with cross-campus Liaison team and unit coordinators.	Good collaborative work.
	LLB Improves student learning and teaching through advice to and collaboration with academics		Eg. Teaching portfolio showing evidence of improvement and effectiveness	Pursued addition of law resources training in the Environmental Health program (CXA302). Collaboration with unit coordinator and law librarian resulted in inclusion of two in-class workshops. Ongoing.	Excellent example of both collaboration with library colleagues and academics and embedding it in the curriculum.
	Contributes to faculty and school-based teaching and learning initiatives and projects and the faculty teaching and learning committee	Participates in faculty teaching and learning committee meeting		Involved in Online Info Lit Tutorial project. Upcoming: Business - generic attributes project. Rowanuna Info Lit curriculum project.	Yes
	Investigates and responds to needs for new programs and works with faculties and schools to plan and implement new programs			In developing embedding of law research skills in CXA302. Further liaised with JS regarding unit content and assessment to embed similar workshops in progressive Accounting subjects (BFA141, 241 391).	Ongoing, but excellent work already done.

### The road from A to B

At the time of writing the Framework:

- has been successfully navigated and completed by two graduate librarians
- is being adapted for use in UTAS Library's Resources and Access section (aka Technical Services)
- has been applied informally to the orientation of experienced librarians who are new to the UTAS Library.

The development of this Framework also fed into the UTAS Library's wider agenda of orienting itself as a learning organisation. By consciously fostering learning and skill development in the individual the Library engages in a continuum of transformation at the organisational level:

Learning organisation>Learning workers>Organisational learning

In this way the Library becomes an embodiment of the principles of lifelong learning.

### Journeying onwards

The Liaison Librarian A Developmental Framework sought to give structure and formal recognition to professional development for new librarians, and the conscious adoption of a flexible approach helped accommodate the inevitable detours in the road to completion. The Framework facilitated a richer and more rapid growth in liaison skills, and the scaffolded structure and comprehensive definition of core capabilities and performance criteria have positioned the Framework as an extremely valuable document across the whole organisation, not just for entry-level librarians.

Just as there is no end point in organisational learning – a point at which an organisation becomes "learned" – so to the development process is ongoing. This Framework represents the first steps on a pathway to lifelong professional learning, both for individuals, and the UTAS Library itself.



Vanessa Warren  
University of Tasmania Library  
Hobart, Tasmania, Australia

b